1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

take further names from any oxen of his herd which delight him. Men salute one another with these names and shower them, with many a fanciful elaboration, on their companions at dances. They also chant them when they display themselves with their oxen in camps, sing them in their poems, and shout them when they spear men, animals, or fish.

A man may be called by the identical name of his ox, e.g. Bi(l)rial, Kwac(c)uor, Werkwac, and so forth, but generally one part of the term is dropped and the other part is prefixed by a new term, usually descriptive of some ornament worn by the ox or some characteristic of it, not employed in defining its own name, e.g. *luth*, a large bell (Fig. 4), *gier*, a small bell, *lue*, a long tassel, *dhuor*, a short tassel (Plate IV), *wak*, the tinkling of an ox-bell, *lang*, a brass ring attached to an ox's collar or tethering-cord (one can be seen on the animal in the foreground of Plate II), *rot*, bellowing of oxen, *cwai*, fatness, *boi*, shining whiteness, &c. Thus a man whose favourite ox has *rial* distribution of colours may be called Luthrial, Gierrial, Luerial, Dhuorrial, Boirial, and so on. When ox-names are used between age-mates at dances they are generally preceded by dance-names which are selected to harmonize with the ox-names, euphony being considered of great importance in all these word formations. Ox-names are voluminous and abstruse, and in describing them, as in describing cattle-colours, I have not only made a meagre selection from the wealth at my disposal, but have also chosen for illustration the simplest examples and neglected the more obscure.

Names of cattle, especially of oxen, and ox-names of men are used profusely in songs. The Nuer, like most pastoral peoples, are poetic and most men and women compose songs which are sung at dances and concerts or are composed for the creator's own pleasure and chanted by him in lonely pastures and amid the cattle in camp kraals. Youths break into song, praising their kinsmen, sweethearts, and cattle, when they feel happy, wherever they may be. I give a free translation of the first verses of two songs, the first sung by girls as they sit together in the evening after the day's work is done, and the second sung by its creator when he is happy.

1. The wind blows *wirawira*;[1]
Where does it blow to?

[1] Literally 'My wind'. The singer runs against it and seems by so doing to add to its strength. This is the north wind which blows at the time of rich

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

233 512 [533] they may have to defend them against carnivorous beasts and human raiders. Often they relieve the monotony and solitude by composing and chanting songs. Nuer say that most songs are invented in the grazing grounds. Herdsmen have a quick meal before leaving camp [264] and, except when there are plenty of *heglig* fruits in the early part of the dry season, they will not have another bite till after sunset. However hungry he might feel no herdsman would milk a cow.

512 462 234 237 After the cattle have left camp the day is closed for the men, as far as routine cattle tasks are concerned, till they are brought back to the kraal in the evening; but women and boys continue their labours. Women milk the goats and sheep and prepare the morning meal. Boys spread out the cattle dung that has collected overnight so that it may dry in the sun and furnish fuel to replenish the household fires at night. They also smooth the part of the kraal occupied by their beasts by rubbing over the earth the nightly residue of ashes, urine, and dung. Boys assist in milking the goats and in taking the small calves to shade. They then take the larger calves and the [233] flocks to pasture. Older boys herd the calves and younger boys look after the flocks in the vicinity of the kraal. They spend most of the day playing games. If a small boy is hungry he catches a she-goat [857] and milks it, holding it by the horns with one hand while he pats its udder and squeezes its teats with the other hand from which he then licks the milk. Or he may suckle it. People do not object to small boys milking the goats they are herding. They are small and hungry and need all the food they can get to grow into strong men.

512 462 224 Not all the adult men have been idle while their womenfolk and the boys have been cleaning the kraal and milking. On most mornings parties of two and three leave camp at dawn with their dogs to pick up a gazelle or other small animal. They do not return to camp till after milking is finished, and those who set out at dawn to inspect their giraffe traps return about the same time. After the cattle have been loosened the men potter about for a couple of hours. Generally some of them are engaged in making utensils and ornaments or in dressing their hair.

535 cut out and sheepskin pulled tightly over it, or it may be
534 a large gourd with a sheepskin covering, or possibly it is made of a piece of the trunk of a tree, hollowed out and covered with sheepskin. But whatever its construction it emits enough sound to please any Nuer when it is beaten in the dance. The drummer beats a rather steady, rhythmic tune on it. One person usually chants a line of a song while all the other dancers chant an alternate line which serves as a chorus.

535 The dance is a group formation. Couples do not dance together.

The men run in in a long line and dance in a group. High jumping is a feature and one is amazed at the height they achieve. Quick advances upon an imaginary foe are made with much brandishing of spears.

One girl leads the group of girls, facing them and leading them as they advance and retreat before her. They keep time to the music with a quick movement of the head and hips.

534 A fiddle is made of a large piece of wood which has been hollowed out, or of a half-gourd, sheepskin being tightly laced over it. Strings are made of gut, and one can play as many as four different notes on some of the fiddles. While the player plays a tune on the strings of the fiddle he keeps up a steady, low accompaniment by thrumming the bowl of the fiddle with the fingers of the other hand.

● 533 Nuer are naturally musical, and many of them are quite good singers. They improvise many of their songs as occasion requires. Many of their songs pertain to marriage, many of them laud cattle or persons and proclaim their praises. Sometimes they voice their disapproval of some individual in song so that all may hear. They have a lullaby for babies also. Some of their songs are of a

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

vulgar type. In construction they are similar, consisting of a verse of one or more lines and a refrain. The verse is usually sung in a higher tone, the refrain being sung in lower tones. They seldom repeat any phrase over and over, but express the same meaning by the use of other words. 533

Another frequent form of amusement is the asking of riddles. If no one can guess the answer, the propounder of the riddle is asked if he or she would take so-and-so of the opposite sex as husband or wife, as the case may be. When an acceptable name is suggested, the propounder gives the answer to the riddle. 524

They have many riddles. Some seem anything but comprehensible to us, but they always tell us that 'a Nuer would understand'. Others are quite intelligible and good.

Sometimes Nuer children draw cattle or other animals; they always make the bodies rectangular in shape. A woman may draw on a gourd (Fig. 9) by making scratches and then rubbing them with charred wood, which gives the figures the effect of having been burnt in. The bodies of animals are drawn in rectangles, but other designs may be used. A border effect of points is often made. 532

MEASURING LENGTH AND HEIGHT

A Nuer indicates the length of small articles by extending the left arm and placing the tips of the fingers of his right hand at a point on the left arm. The distance between the tips of the fingers of the left hand and the place where the fingers of the right hand touch the left arm indicates the length that is meant. 804

When he desires to show the height of an animal he extends the right hand, palm downward. The distance between the ground and the extended palm is the height indicated.

fills a man, his character is changed. The man is hollowed out by Spirit to receive it. In this sense *gwang* is complementary to *kwoth*, inspiration to extirpation.[1]

Prophets may perform sacrifices on behalf of individuals or of the people of their neighbourhoods in times of sickness, for barrenness, and on other occasions when spiritual aid is required, but the main social function of the leading prophets in the past was to direct cattle-raids on the Dinka and fighting against the various foreigners who troubled the Nuer from the northern Sudan. For the most part the air-spirits are conspicuously associated with war, and Nuer prophets are chiefly regarded as the medium through which God gives orders to fight and victory. The spirits accompany the warriors to battle.

Before Nuer set off for any large-scale fighting against strangers their prophets made sacrifice and sang hymns to the spirits of the air while the warriors, kneeling on one knee and with the points of their spears resting on the ground, sang the responses. The same posture is adopted by warriors in making the responses to these songs when they are sung by a song-leader on ceremonial occasions. Also people, generally and perhaps always under a prophet's direction, sing hymns to the spirits on occasions of sickness and of other troubles; though Nuer say that they sometimes sing the hymns, as at dances, 'just to be happy with the son of God'. Unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to record more than a few verses of these hymns.

I give below a short hymn to *buk*. It is known all over Nuerland and is therefore probably earlier than most hymns. It is sometimes sung at mortuary ceremonies, and it is also sung before fishing battues are begun, on account of the spirit's association with rivers and streams.

Mother of *deng*, the ants (the Nuer) ransom their lives from thee,
Mother of *dengkur*, the ants ransom their lives from thee,
The mother of *dengkur* brings life,
The mother of *dengkur* brings me life,
Life is revived.
She brings life and our children play,
They cry aloud with joy,
With the life of the mother of *deng*, with the life of the mother of *deng*.

[1] [Should be expiration, see errata, cat. 116.] (45)

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

SPIRITS OF THE ABOVE

x 776
●533
539

The pied crows are given life and are filled.[1]
Our speech is good, we and *buk*,
Our speech is excellent;
The country of the people is good.
We journey on the path of the *pake*.[2]
We are here, we and *buk deang*,
Buk, mother of *deng*, the ants ransom their lives from thee,
Mother of *dengkur*, the ants ransom their lives from thee.
We give thee red blood.
The ants of *deng* are simple people, they do not understand how their lives are supported.
Let all the people of the cattle camps bring tobacco to the river.

The general sense of this hymn is that *buk* protects the people from dangers and gives them life. Protection and life are given them in exchange for oblations of animals (the red blood) and tobacco. I give the opening verses of another hymn, which appears to be addressed to both *dayim* and *mani*. It is a war hymn, although I heard it myself at a ceremony in western Nuerland held in honour of a person killed by lightning.

x 776
535
539
721

Stars and moon which are in the heavens,
Blood of *deng* which you have taken,[3]
You have not summoned the ants of *deng* capriciously,[4]
Blood of *deng* which you have taken,
The wing of battle on the river bank is encircled by plumes.[5]
Dayim, son of God, strike the British to the ground,
Break the steamer on the Nile and let the British drown,
Kill the people on the mountains,[6]
Kill them twice,[7]

[1] The pied crow 'is' *buk* (p. 81).

[2] This is not a Nuer word but the Arabic *faki*, a fakir or holy man. In Nuer the word is used for an Arab pedlar or merchant. The use of the word in this hymn, probably one of the oldest Nuer hymns, is further evidence of the late introduction of these spirits into Nuerland.

[3] Dinka blood on Nuer spears.

[4] The spirits which summoned the Nuer to raid the Dinka through the mouths of their prophets did not summon them in vain. The raid was successful. The ants are the Nuer.

[5] When warriors are drawn up for battle the prophet runs along the flanks shouting encouragement to them and waving his spear decorated with ostrich plumes.

[6] The people of the Nuba hills.

[7] Slay them two years in succession.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

SPIRITS OF THE ABOVE

Do not slay them jestingly.[1]
Mani goes with a rush,
He goes on for ever,
The sons of Jagei are proud in the byres,[2]
Proud that they always raid the Dinka.

I do not know the time or circumstances of composition of this hymn, but as it not only exults in defeats of the Dinka and asks for victory over the people of the Nuba hills but also demands the destruction of the British it must be fairly recent and probably dates from the early days of British occupation of the Southern Sudan. Dr. Lienhardt has recorded a hymn about *deng* which vividly suggests the mobility of the spirits of the air and the ubiquity of Spirit. A man says he is tired of the demands made by *deng* and that he will move. But *deng* replies

A man avoiding *deng*
Will find *deng* in front,
On the right he will find *deng*,
On the left he will find *deng*,
Behind him he will find *deng*.

In another hymn he recorded there is a metaphor in which protection of the people by *deng* is compared to the coiling of a python around its young. These hymns are, I believe, always the creations of prophets, and Nuer say that they come to them in dreams, unlike ordinary songs or poems which men construct for themselves when idling, as when herding in the grazing grounds. We need not concern ourselves greatly with their word to word meaning. Nuer do not do so, or even know it, and the songs may be sung on occasions which in no way concern the particular spirits they are addressed to and for which the words have no relevance, the songs merely serving to create atmosphere and to express a general sense and intention. I have been told that the hymns sometimes come to a prophet through a drum, called *bul kwoth*, spirit's drum, dedicated to his spirit, which is thought to be in some way immanent in it. These drums, which are beaten at dances held in honour of the spirits to which they are dedicated, are formally dedicated by being rubbed with ashes, in the same

[1] Do not trifle with them but strike them hard.

[2] The Jagei are a small group of Nuer tribes; but since the Nuer believe that they were created in their territory the word probably here refers to the Nuer as a whole.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

way as an animal is dedicated, while a short invocation is made. They are decorated with beads and metal rings. I was told that now and again, especially after dreams, a prophet rubs his spirit's drum with ashes, and sometimes also with butter, and asks God for peace and happiness. A prophet also builds a mud shrine, called *yik* or, if it is shaped like a windscreen, *buor*, to his spirit, the largest monument of the first kind being the pyramid of *deng* in the Lou tribal territory (p. 306).

IV

I now come to the most difficult, and the most important, part of this survey. How do Nuer conceive of these spirits in relation to God? I do not attempt yet to make a full analysis of the notion of *kwoth*, but only to discuss a limited part of it, the nature of the spirits of the air; though what is said about them has some bearing on the nature of other spirits and of Spirit in general. The matter is, for us, complex and confusing, and the conclusion I reached about it, that the spirits of the air are conceived of as both separate beings and yet also as different manifestations of God, may at first sight seem to hold a contradiction.

We may say to begin with that there is no question of Nuer regarding these spirits as beings of the same importance as *kwoth a nhial*. Whatever else they may be thought to be they are not thought of as beings independent of and equal to him. There is only one God. This is evident from a number of facts.

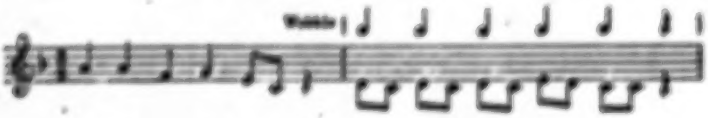
In the first place, it is shown by the way Nuer regard the beliefs of neighbouring peoples. It creates no problem for them when they find other peoples approaching God under different titles and in different ways from their own. Some Nuer, in spite of the general isolation of the Nuer and their lack of interest in other peoples, are aware that in religious matters neighbouring peoples differ to a greater or lesser degree from themselves. Some of them know something of Dinka religious beliefs and ceremonies, and a few of them are also aware, though Islam has made no impression on them, that Arab traders have their own form of worship and, though the influence of the Christian missions has been negligible,[1] that the Christian missionaries and their converts have

[1] In 1948, some years after I had concluded my research, there were 464 Nuer (150 Catholics and 314 Protestants), easily the lowest figure for

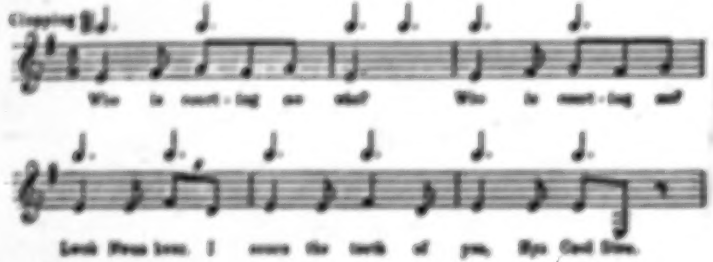
7:Tucker E-S (1949-1933) 1933 FJ23 Shiltuk FJ23
More FJ22

Third movement: The boys all shout together "Open and shut, Open and shut!" At the word "Open," all the toes are bent backwards, at the word "Shut" they are all bent forwards, so that the centre square of toes looks like some great black sea-anemone opening and shutting itself.

Fourth movement: Keeping their feet and toes still, the boys wobble their knees rapidly up and down. I was unable to get the words of this song, but the tune is as follows:—



These movements can occur in any order, according to the will of the song-leader.

7. Most girls are fond of ring games, but there is little action in those that I have seen. The girls kneel in a ring; one girl sings a song of about three lines, and the rest repeat it, clapping their knees. Then the girl next to her takes up the song, extemporizing upon the same theme with a view to scoring a "hit" off one of them present. If she succeeds, she is greeted with yells of approval, and all join lustily in the chorus, while the third girl exhausts her limited fertile imagination necessary to cap this verse if possible. These witticisms usually lie around the nature of friends or bear some obscure reference to well-known incidents, with the result that an investigator without intimate knowledge of the children's daily affairs finds the songs unintelligible. This is one of the verses:

In the following song the voice rhythm (indicated V) differs markedly from the clapping rhythm (indicated ♩ ♪):

T:Tucker E-S (1929-1933) 1933 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23
FJ22 Nuer
FJ18 Mitta

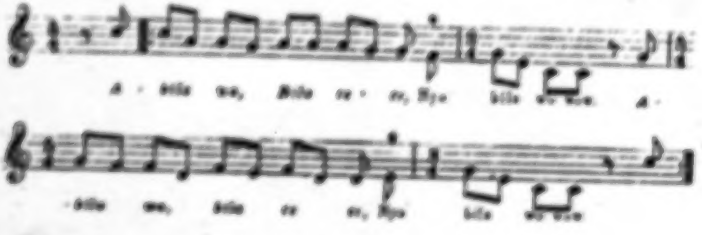
The following singing game requires rapid thought and good memory. Each girl in turn has to think of a different animal's name, the aim being not to repeat the name a previous girl has sung:— N 524 533 539

8. *Ring o' Roses.* There are many games which comprise mere dancing or capering in a ring. In the following Bahr game the players first dance round in a ring, holding hands, singing:— M 524 533 539

Then, with a change of the music, they swing their right legs over their arms, and leap round until they fall down. (*See* Fig. 5, Pl. XV.)

[*Note.* The note transcribed E sounds somewhere between E and F.]

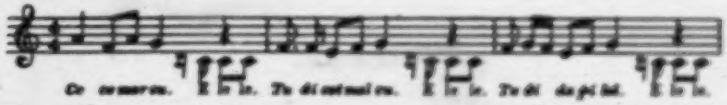
9. A popular form of "Ring o' Roses" is played as follows. The Shilluk version has two parts, but the words of the song have no decipherable meaning. (Here again I heard a game which was difficult to place. I have transcribed it sometimes E and sometimes F.) S 524 533 539

First movement: The players stand in a circle with hands on each other's shoulders, and sway as they sing:—

7:Tucker E-5 (1929-1933) 1933 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23
Nuer FJ22

LINE GAMES.

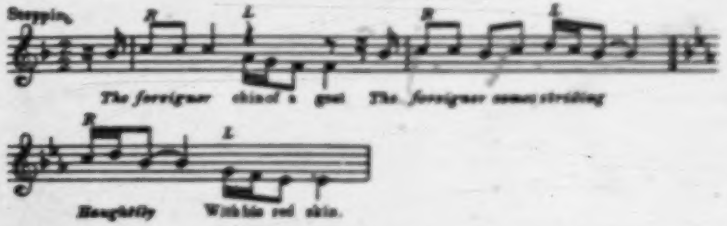
N 524 18. ***Nuts and May.***—The Nuers have a form of this game of which the details are rather vague. The children stand in two lines, facing each other, some dozen yards apart. A member of one line advances towards the other line with a peculiar prancing step, waving his hands above his head, singing :—

N 533 539

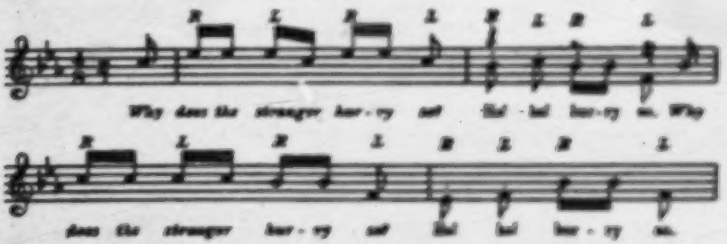


(The words, so far as I could make out, are meaningless.) He singles out a member of the other side and chases him round both lines and back to his place. What happens if he catches him I could not find out.

S 524 533 539 The following Shilluk version is evidently a recent invention, and probably confined to the particular group of Shilluks I was studying. The boys line up in two ranks, as if for "Nuts and May." One line advances towards the other, marching slowly in "goose step" (see Fig. 4, Pl. XVI), while the other line retreats, both sides singing :—



Then the song is repeated, while the other line advances, and so on, to and fro, several times. Suddenly the pace is doubled ; the boys running stiff-legged, those advancing trying to kick the shins of those who are retreating. The song now is :—



As before, on every repetition the direction is changed